

still, i feel as if i should probably  
offer some sort of fatherly moral counsel.

until a conversation pops into my head  
that i once had with a wise and experienced  
friend of mine.  
i had said something about saving my lies  
for important situations,  
and he just shook his head and replied,  
in the manner of sidney greenstreet in the big sleep  
"gerry, it is not a talent  
you can turn on and off at will.  
lie every chance you get:  
the more facility you develop,  
the more convincing you'll be  
when the really big lie is finally called for."

of course he was right.  
i didn't follow his advice and,  
as just one example of honest not being the best policy,  
i once had my car insurance cancelled  
when i admitted living in actuarial sin.

so now i shut my mouth  
and concentrate on getting my daughter  
back to school on time.

-- Gerald Locklin

Long Beach CA

## HOTEL FELIX

the Hotel Felix near Beverly and Vermont had many  
qualities including an old man in room 101 who never  
left his bed and always sat straight upright in his  
underwear and he claimed he was the F.B.I. and he  
arrested me almost every night we drank cheap wine  
together.

but Big Benny was best: the sound of him -- about  
once a week -- was known to all of us: he'd fall  
down the long stairway -- 32 steps -- slowly and with  
high dramatics (he had an egg-shaped head and very  
long legs) and every time with his last roll he'd  
kick out his feet and break the glass in the glass  
doorway -- the glass which proclaimed:

H O T E L F E L I X

REASONABLE RATES

and most of us would leave our rooms and go down  
smashed and stinking in torn and bereft clothing  
with rolled cigarettes in our mouths, asking,  
"you all right, Benny? Benny, you all right?"  
and he would be covered with just the proper amount  
of vomit and blood and we would circle about him  
with our solicitations but my need for another drink  
always overcame me and I'd go back to my tiny room  
with my girlfriend or we'd go back to the F.B.I. agent's  
place and the cops never got Benny and the ambulance  
never came and you wouldn't hear from Benny again until  
next time.

there were other people there too and they were quite  
as interesting and then my girlfriend died and I moved  
five blocks west and six blocks north.

YES

no matter who I'm with  
people always say,  
are you still with her?

my average relationship lasts  
two and one half years.

with wars  
inflation  
unemployment  
alcoholism  
gambling  
and my own degenerate nervousness  
I think I do well enough.

I like reading the Sunday papers in bed.  
I like orange ribbons tied around cats' necks.  
I like sleeping up against a body that I know well.

I like black slips at the foot of my bed  
at 2 in the afternoon.  
I like seeing how the photos turned out.

I like to be helped through the holidays:  
4th. of July, Labor Day, Halloween, Thanksgiving,  
Christmas, New Year's.  
they know how to ride these rapids  
and they are less afraid of love than I am.

they can make me laugh where professional comedians  
fail.

there is walking out to buy a newspaper together.